



Proceedings of the VII International Meeting of the  
Society of Avian Paleontology and Evolution

edited by

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## Foreword

This volume comprises the Proceedings of the VII International Meeting of the Society for Avian Paleontology and Evolution (SAPE). The previous six meetings were held in North America, Europe and China. This seventh meeting marks the first gathering of the Society in the Southern Hemisphere. It was hosted by, and held at, the Australian Museum, in Sydney, from 18–23 August, 2008.

The comparative remoteness of Australia, coupled with a global economic downturn at that time, limited the number of members to fewer than had attended previous meetings. Nonetheless, it was an excellent meeting, the 40 participants representing 11 countries enjoying here the company of a good turnout of Australian and New Zealand paleontologists. Consequently, the results of a large number of Australian- and New Zealand-based studies were presented, more than at previous meetings.

The sixteen works in this volume reflect the full range of the 40 talks and posters presented at the Meeting. The topics were wide-ranging, addressing, among other things, progress in some of the world's most developed faunas, such as Messel and Green River, the amazing insights into early avian evolution emerging from the Chinese deposits, and the recently uncovered and highly intriguing St Bathans locality in New Zealand. The diverse research directions of SAPE members, while united by a common interest in avian evolution, was very evident. For example, the period of interest include Mesozoic (8 presentations), Tertiary (15), Quaternary (9), and Modern, including DNA, (8). By subject area, the categories included taxonomy/phylogeny (20), anatomy (11), ecology (2) and biogeography/phylogeography (7). Some members dealt with only a single taxon, while others looked at birds on a global scale. The developing role of DNA in unravelling avian phylogenies and its synergy with fossil analyses was addressed in four papers, and a group discussion, led by Per Ericson, focussed on the integration of molecular data with the fossil record. A novel component of the scientific program at this meeting was a President's Lecture, given by Ken Campbell on The Automated Balance System in Birds.

Presenters at the meeting encompassed a wide range of experience. The paleontologists of long standing were able to enjoy the enthusiasm and interest of a number of students and early career workers—the next generation of avian paleontology.

At previous meetings, there has been one or more field trips to local fossil sites that have bird remains. No such location exists close to Sydney, so the opportunity was taken to visit sites at which representatives of the characteristic and restricted extant Australian bird families could be encountered. Trips were run on two days, visiting rainforests, wetlands and woodland, with most target groups successfully observed.

At the business meeting, Per Ericson was elected as President and Trevor Worthy as Vice-President, while Gerald Mayr and David Steadman remain as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. The new Executive Council consists of five Members-at-large: Estelle Bourdon, Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan, Ursula Göhlich, Jorge Noriega and Marcel van Tuinen. Members voted to accept the invitation from the Naturhistorisches Museum Wien, Austria, to host the next meeting in 2012.

Many thanks go to Jaynia Sladek (Bird Section, Australian Museum), who was indispensable and responsible for so much of the organization; Dr Les Christidis, who in his role as Assistant Director, Research and Collections, encouraged the Museum to offer to host this meeting at the previous gathering in Quillan, France; Dr Anne Musser (Australian Museum) for the artwork that adorned the scientific program cover (and this cover) and conference t-shirts; the Australian Museum, for making the facilities and staff available for hosting the meeting, and particularly Venues (Mark Connolly and Scott Gilkeson), for ensuring that the rooms and catering worked smoothly; Dr Shane McEvey, The Editor, *Records of the Australian Museum*, for producing this volume with minimal problems or delays; to all the authors and referees who contributed to this volume; and to all the participants at the meeting, whether presenting or not, for guaranteeing an informative and enjoyable meeting.

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Delegates to the VII International Meeting of the Society of Avian Paleontology and Evolution, Sydney, 18–23 August 2008. Front row (left to right): Gary Kaiser (USA), Jenny Worthy (Australia), Trevor Worthy (Australia), Ken Campbell (USA), Per Ericson (Sweden), Tommy Tyrberg (Sweden), Gerald Mayr (Germany). Second row (left to right): Luis Chiappe (USA), Teresa Tomek (Poland), Zbigniew Bocheński (Poland), Ursula Göhlich (Austria), Albrecht Manegold (Germany), Ilka Weidig (Germany), Zhiheng Li (China), Hanneke Meijer (Netherlands), Kari Prassack (USA). Third row (left to right): Alyssa Bell (USA), Priscilla Gaff (Australia), Estelle Bourdon (France), Paul Scofield (New Zealand), Alan Tennyson (New Zealand), Jackie Nguyen (Australia), Zhonghe Zhou (China), Brian Gill (New Zealand), Janette Norman (Australia). Fourth row (left to right): Andrzej Elzanowski (Poland), Gillian Gibbs (New Zealand), Roger Close (Australia), Anne Musser (Australia), Nic Rawlence (Australia), Kate McCarville (USA), Anita Gamauf (Austria), Alan Lamm (Australia). Fifth row (left to right): Gareth Dyke (Ireland), Jingmai O'Connor (USA), Walter Boles (Australia). Present but not pictured: Sylvia Hope (USA), Mike Dickison (New Zealand), Matt Phillips (Australia), Les Christidis (Australia), Jaynia Sladek (Australia).

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